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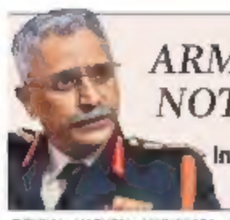


ARMY CHIEF WARNS CHINA, PAK NOT TO TEST FORCES' PATIENCE

In a warning to China, Army Chief Gen M M Naravane said on Friday that no one should make the mistake of testing India's patience

GALWAN HEROES' SACRIFICE WON'T GO WASTE

The general said India is committed to resolving the eight-month-long military standoff with China through talks. In his address at the Army Day parade in Delhi, Gen Naravane said the sacrifice of the 'Galwan heroes' in eastern Ladakh in June last year will not go waste and that the Indian Army will not allow any harm to the country's sovereignty and security

400 PAK TERRORISTS WAITING AT LOC

- Gen Naravane said Pakistan continues to shelter terrorists and 300-400 of them are waiting in training camps on the Pakistani side of the LoC to infiltrate into India
- For the first time, drone operations featured at the Army Day parade held in Delhi Cantonment on Friday | P9

200

MILITANTS KILLED IN COUNTER-TERROR OPERATIONS AND ON LoC LAST YEAR

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Mother of all vax drives begins

100 frontline beneficiaries to get inoculated at each of the 3,006 centres across India

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

INDIA will roll out the world's biggest vaccination programme on Saturday by inoculating over three lakh healthcare workers against Covid-19, which brought the entire country, and the world, to a halt for much of last year.

In all, 3,006 vaccination centres across all states and Union Territories will be virtually connected as Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch the drive at 10.30 am, with 100 beneficiaries getting the shots at each site on the first day. Modi said the country will enter a "decisive phase" in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic on Saturday.

Amid concerns over the efficacy of the indigenously developed Covaxin vaccine by Bharat Biotech, Union health minister Harsh Vardhan on Friday reiterated that both Covaxin and Covishield, manufactured by Pune-based Serum Institute, have "proven safety and immunogenicity records".

These two vaccines will be the "most important tool" to control the pandemic, he added. "Tomorrow is an important day... it is the last phase of the battle against coronavirus. This is probably the beginning of the end of Covid," he said.

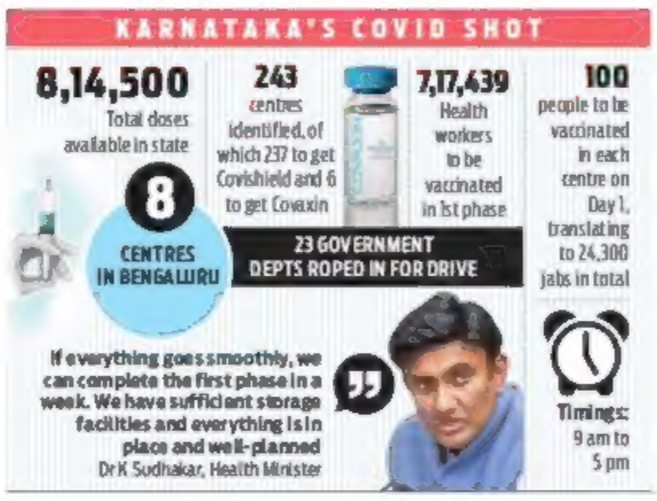
The minister, however, cautioned that even after vaccination, people should not lower their guard and must follow Covid-appropriate behaviour.

The immunisation drive will begin with healthcare workers, both in government and private sectors, getting the shots.

While reviewing the preparation of the launch, Vardhan suggested that the CoWIN software be pre-populated with non-prioritised beneficiaries by seeding it with electoral database, in addition to other documents for registration.

CoWIN, short for Covid Vaccine Intelligence Network, is an online platform meant to facilitate real-time information of vaccine stocks, storage temperature and individualised tracking of beneficiaries for Covid-19 vaccine. It will also assist programme managers track beneficiary coverage, beneficiary dropouts, sessions planned versus sessions held and vaccine utilisation.

The minister also advised the administrative machinery to go all out to counter the misinformation campaign being spread by vested interests, said a statement by the ministry.


KARNATAKA'S COVID SHOT
8,14,500
Total doses available in state
8
CENTRES IN BENGALURU
243
centres identified, of which 237 to get Covishield and 6 to get Covaxin
7,17,439
Health workers to be vaccinated in 1st phase
23 GOVERNMENT DEPTS ROPED IN FOR DRIVE
100
people to be vaccinated in each centre on Day 1, translating to 24,300 jabs in total
If everything goes smoothly, we can complete the first phase in a week. We have sufficient storage facilities and everything is in place and well-planned
Dr K Sudhakar, Health Minister
Timings: 9 am to 5 pm

Doctors still wary of Covaxin

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA @ New Delhi

WHILE the Centre has given two Covid-19 vaccines, Covishield and Covaxin, accelerated approvals and a level playing field though the latter is yet to prove its efficacy, sections of doctors are wary, as they are first in line to get the jab along with other healthcare workers.

In fact, the Tamil Nadu Government Doctors' Association (TNGDA), a group of 20,000 healthcare professionals, has circulated an internal advisory asking its members to "insist on Covishield" when they are called for immunisation.

The Centre has procured 1.1 crore doses of Covishield and 55 lakh doses of Covaxin for the first phase of vaccination. While most states received only Covishield, 11 — Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Delhi, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, UP and TN — have been sent both. P3, 9

STALEMATE ON

Centre-farmer talks fail, next meet on Jan 19

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi / Chandigarh

THE ninth round of talks between farmers' unions and the Centre on Friday remained inconclusive but both sides agreed to meet again next Tuesday in a bid to break the deadlock over three contentious farm laws.

"The government urged farmers to form an informal group among themselves to prepare concrete proposals to be discussed in the next meeting," Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said. However, the unions rejected the suggestion.

Harinder Singh Lakhowal, general secretary of Bharatiya Kisan Union, Punjab (Lakhowal group) said the Centre asked the union leaders to discuss their problems with the farm laws clause-wise. The farmers said no. They also turned down the government's request to meet the panel formed by the Supreme Court.

The apex court, on January 12, stayed implementation of the laws and set up a panel to talk to both the striking farmers and the government. The farm unions have welcomed the stay but refused to meet the panel saying it's pro-government. The farmers have reiterated they won't end their protest until the three laws are withdrawn fully. The next round of talks will be significant as the SC-appointed committee will be present. P9

EXPRESS READ

Highway crash in Dharwad claims 11 lives

Dharwad: Eleven people, including nine women, were killed in a road accident near Ittigatti Cross on the outskirts of Dharwad on Friday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted a condolence message for the victims | P5

Exports rise to $27.15 bn in Dec

New Delhi: India's exports grew to $27.15 billion in December while imports surged 7.56 per cent, increasing the trade deficit to $15.44 billion, according to official data. Imports during the month were at $42.59 billion | P16

Biden announces $1.9 tn Covid plan

Washington: President-elect Joe Biden has announced a $1.9 trillion stimulus package for the coronavirus-sapped US economy, including direct financial aid to average Americans, and a national vaccination plan | P11

B'luru best city to host Aero India: Rajnath

MG CHETAN @ Bengaluru

WITH the countdown for Asia's premier air show, Aero India 2021, beginning, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, who was in Bengaluru on Friday to review the preparations, expressed confidence that it will be a "grand and successful" event, despite the Covid-19 pandemic. Stating that Bengaluru is the best city in the country to host such an event, he said the order of 83 Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) to Bengaluru-headquartered Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), valued at nearly Rs 46,000 crore, will be a boon to the state.

Singh, who reviewed the arrangements for the air show, said they discussed the progress made so far and the state government has been directed to make all preparations to ensure that the event is a grand success.

The state has also been given a set of directions and protocols to be followed as per the requirement of the Ministry of Defence and also the Covid-19 guidelines, he said.

CONTINUED ON: P7

₹21K cr road infrastructure boost for North K'taka

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru, Hubballi

In a major impetus for road infrastructure in north Karnataka, Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, has sanctioned 13 highway projects running a length of 847 km at the cost of Rs 21,000 crore. The projects include widening of the Hubballi-Dharwad bypass and Belagavi-Raichur highway and bypass road for Naragud and Navalagund towns.

Virtually laying the foundation for the elevated corridor to built over Rani Chennamma Circle in Hubballi, Gadkari said all the project sanctioned will be taken up this year itself and detailed project reports are being prepared. He sought the cooperation of Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa, who was virtually present in the meeting, for necessary land acquisition, environmental clearances, and utility shifting.

For the socio-economic development of North Karnataka, improving national highway infrastructure is very much important and hence, the ministry has announced 627 km of highways in the past three years. Building highways in the region will not only improve the road network, but also provide better connectivity with neighbouring states like Maharashtra and Telangana, the minister noted. P7

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